For vampires, fairies, humans
and MERMAIDS everywhere!

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based on original artwork by Harriet Muncaster

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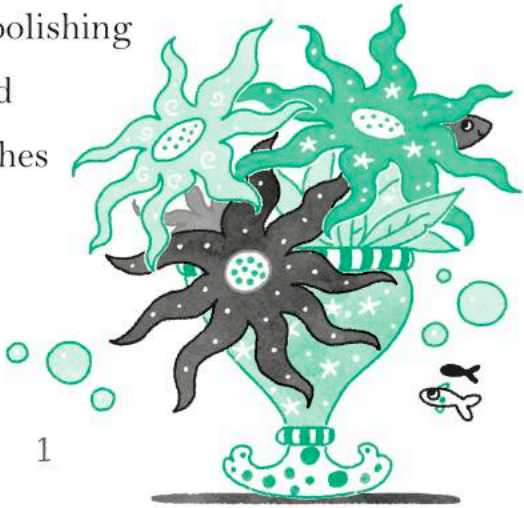
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Chapter ONE

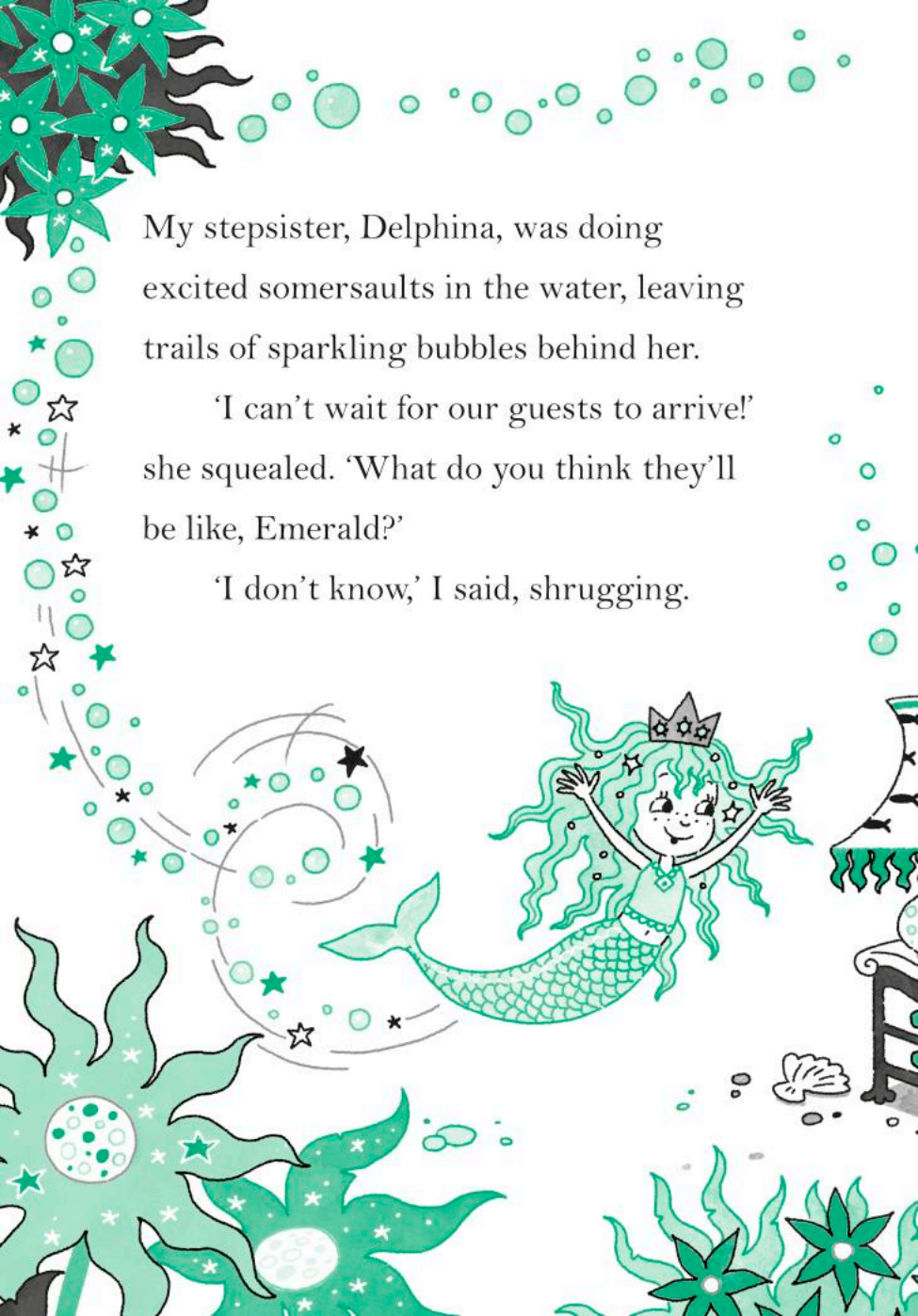
It was a very busy morning in the palace. Everywhere I looked, merpeople were swishing around, polishing the chandeliers and putting huge bunches of beautiful wavy sea flowers in vases.



My stepsister, Delphina, was doing excited somersaults in the water, leaving trails of sparkling bubbles behind her.

'I can't wait for our guests to arrive!' she squealed. 'What do you think they'll be like, Emerald?'

'I don't know,' I said, shrugging.



All I wanted to do was find a quiet place to start on my school project. My teacher, Mrs Shell-Clacker, wanted us all to write about something new we had learned over the summer holidays to share with the rest of the class. It was almost time for school to start again and I hadn't got around to writing anything!



'Are you *still* thinking about your project, Emerald?' asked Delphina.

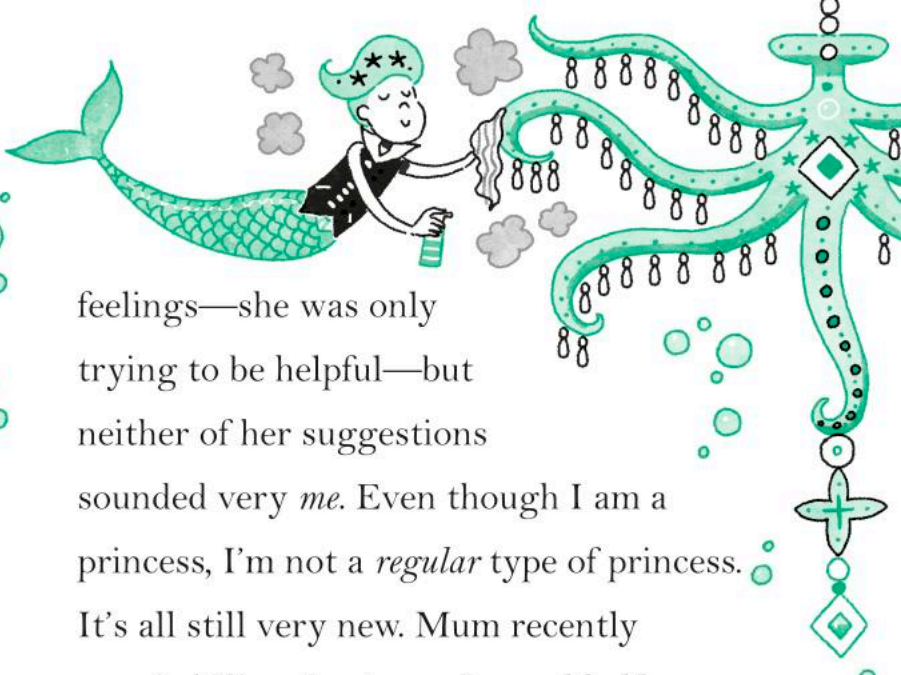
'I can't decide what subject to write about,' I admitted. 'I've had loads of fun over the summer with my friends, but I don't think we did anything *new*. Most of the time we just hung out at the skate park.'

'I know!' said Delphina. 'You could do your project on how to arrange a bunch of sea flowers, or how about . . . chandelier polishing!'

'Er . . .' I said. 'Maybe.'

I didn't want to hurt Delphina's





feelings—she was only trying to be helpful—but neither of her suggestions sounded very *me*. Even though I am a princess, I'm not a *regular* type of princess. It's all still very new. Mum recently married King Auster so I spend half my time living in the palace and half with Dad, who lives in a small, pearly pink house on the other side of Scallop City.

'I'll think about it,' I said. 'Thanks, Delphina!'

I swam off to see if I could find Mum and Auster. Maybe they would be able to help me?

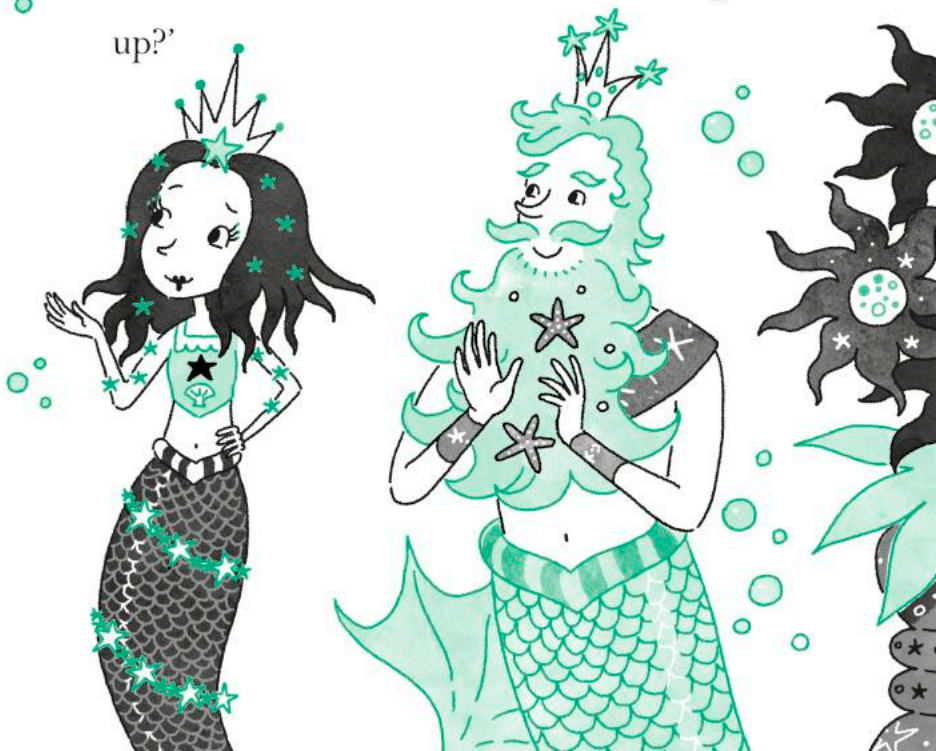
'There you are Emerald!' cried Mum when she saw me. 'I was just about to come and find you. It's time to get changed. Our guests will be here soon!'

I stared at Mum in dismay.



Auster smiled. 'The Seadragon royal family from the Kingdom of Aquilla will be here any minute. I'd like Scallop City to build good relations with Aquilla, so it's important we give them a warm welcome.'

'I know,' I said. 'But can't we give them a warm welcome *without* dressing up?'



I *really* hate being told what to wear. I have a very *specific* style. It's punky and gothic, and nothing like the traditional royal dress that princesses in our kingdom are supposed to wear for special occasions. I feel very proud of my unique style. It makes me feel like *me*.

'You only have to wear it for one evening,' said Mum. 'Please, Emerald?'

I sighed.

'OK,' I said, shrugging.

'Great!' said Mum, looking relieved. 'Thank you, my little sea jewel. Your outfit is laid out on your bed, all ready.'

I forced myself to smile.

'Thanks,' I said. 'I'll put it on in a

minute, but Mum . . . I was wondering if you could help me with my school project first?'

'Can we do it later?' said Mum, sounding a bit frazzled. 'I'm a little busy just at the moment!'

'O—K,' I sighed.

